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Herter's New Position Complex and Difficult

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Washington—The job of under secretary of state, to which Gov. Christian A. Herter is scheduled to step on Feb. 1, is one of the most complex and difficult in the Department of State, and indeed, in the government.

The country doesn't hear much about it except on unusual occasions, as when the under secretary is a man of strong and colorful personality, or when the absence or illness of the secretary thrusts the number two man forward. That last experience has just been visited upon Herbert Hoover Jr., whom Mr. Herter will replace.

But if relatively obscure, the job is of great importance. It has been held by quite a few men of distinction, and in fewer instances, by men who were not so hot. To a remarkable degree, the importance of the post is governed by how important the occupant makes it.

The general reaction here to the selection of Mr. Herter by President Eisenhower has been favorable. Actually, however, it is awfully hard to say in advance how good a man is going to be in the second spot, until he has taken hold.

Unites Warring Factions

The under secretary is the man in whom all the problems of the department, both political and administrative, converge, or should converge, before they move in to the secretary's office. It is his job, or should be, to pull together all the warring factions, so that the battles are settled in the vestibule, instead of on the secretary's carpet. If an under secretary does his job well, a secretary can devote his time to thinking, or, if he is so inclined, to loafing.

The under secretary has some people to learn on. He usually has as one of his deputies the top "political officer," in the diplomatic sense, of the department, and he has a deputy for economic affairs and one for administration.

If he wishes, he can have his finger in almost every pie containing any foreign affairs ingredient. He has on his desk one of those white telephones connected directly with the White House. Runners



bring him telegrams at home at night to keep him informed about the world. If ordinarily diligent, he gets in before the secretary in the morning and has things lined up and ready, and spends perhaps 15 minutes with him before the secretary holds his general staff meeting.

On Many Committees

The under secretary represents the secretary in a great many of the committees which flourish in the government. In the secretary's absence, he represents the department in the National Security Council. He is chairman of the Operations Coordinating Board, the NSC's follow-up agency. And when the secretary is away, or sick, the under secretary becomes the acting secretary.

Sumner Welles was under secretary to Cordell Hull, and was not only good, but almost too good, so that Mr. Hull felt he was being elbowed. Mr. Welles probably had a closer relationship with President Franklin D. Roosevelt than Mr. Hull did, partly because Mr. Welles was a professional diplomat.

The late Edward R. Stettinius was an under secretary before he became secretary, but left little mark on the job. Joseph C. Grew, a distinguished career diplomat who brings stature to any position, was another.

Dean Acheson was an under secretary under George C. Marshall.

and people knew who Mr. Acheson was even if they didn't know exactly what an under secretary was. It was as under secretary that Mr. Acheson made the famous Cleveland, Miss., speech heralding the Marshall Plan.

Robert A. Lovett, who later became secretary of defense, was an under secretary of state, and is remembered as one to whom few if any predecessors were superior or any successors have been or are likely to be superior. James E. Webb, who had been budget director in the government, was an Acheson under secretary in a curious experiment which didn't pay off. David Bruce also served, quietly and effectively, under Mr. Acheson.

Then Gen. Walter Bedell Smith came in when Secretary Dulles took over. He was a martinet, but he was decisive and hard-driving and he defended his department, and in the end, even those who hated his manners respected his competence. He gave way to Mr. Hoover, whose accomplishments are too recent for summary appraisal.

Herter a Charmer

It is being said on all sides that Mr. Herter, who served five terms in the House, will be able to charm Congress. It might be remembered that the same thing was said about Mr. Acheson when he became under secretary.

Mr. Herter is an affable person with a great many friends on the Hill and in the executive branch. He was remarkably successful as a politician. His experience in foreign affairs is being somewhat exaggerated. His direct experience lay in the years 1916 to 1919. Although the impression is current that he specialized in foreign affairs in the House during his 10 years there, 1943 to 1952, he actually did not go on the Foreign Affairs Committee until the very end of his House service. He did act as vice chairman of a special committee on foreign aid in the Republican 80th Congress, but his committee work was predominantly on merchant marine and fisheries, a good spot for a Massachusetts man, and on the rules committee.

Record Internationalist

His record in the House was generally internationalist. He did, however, vote to refuse the congressional role in treaty-making by bringing the House into it, a constitutional amendment proposed in 1945 which never got anywhere. In 1945, too, he voted against the three-year extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, which at that time, was a vote considered isolationist.

He usually supported Marshall Plan legislation, but in 1949 he cast his vote in favor of cutting arms aid to Europe exactly in half. In 1950 he voted against government guarantees for United States private investments abroad, a feature of the Point IV program,

and in 1951 he supported the isolationist Rep. Réece in a move to cut 350 million dollars off European economic aid. In 1952 he supported an amendment to limit military spending to a flat 46 billion dollars.